

# OCTOBER MEETING

## Second Speaker Dover and the Zulu War

A talk by Phil Eyden – Reported by Alan Lee

About three years ago Phil was invited by Marianne Slater to look at the old Western Heights Garrison Church baptism logs prior to them being moved to the National Archives. He then spent several months transcribing the 2,000 plus entries. Having completed this task he decided to research some of the entries.

He was amazed to discover that the 2nd Battalion 24th (2nd Warwickshire) Regiment of Foot had been stationed at the Citadel. From 1873 their regimental depot was at The Barracks, Brecon. It was not until 1st July 1881 that, under the Cardwell reforms, the regiment became known as The South Wales Borderers.

On arrival at the SE Railway's Town station, at Dover, on 26th July 1875, the 2nd Bn had been on manoeuvres at Aldershot, they consisted of 29 Officers, 490 men and 100 woman and children. They formed up and with a band playing they marched up the hill to the Citadel. On this march Cpl Jordan Checketts, a 29 year old, complained of chest pains. Sgt John Lines, later to be killed at Isandlwana, obtained permission for him to fall out. He sat down near to the parade ground, had a fit and died 10 minutes later. The inquest, at the Albion Inn, Hawkesbury Street returned the verdict, "Death from Heart Disease, accelerated by the exertion of ascending the hill leading to the Heights."

On 25th August 1875 the regiment held a reception at the Citadel for Capt Webb who had, earlier in the day, become the first person to successfully swim the English Channel.

On 21st June 1877 they departed for Chatham, then on 1st February 1878 they entrained for Portsmouth and the next day boarded the troopship Himalaya and sailed for Natal, South Africa.

During his research Phil identified some 30 names from the 2nd Bn 24th of Foot. These included some who were immortalized in the 1964 film Zulu (the actors names appear in brackets):

**Pte William Jones (Richard Davis).** Born 1840 at Evesham, Worcestershire and suffered chronic rheumatism all his life. His wife accompanied him to South Africa but became ill during her pregnancy and she and the child died during childbirth. Along with Pte Robert Jones he was awarded the Victoria Cross (V.C.) at Rorke's Drift. They defended the hospital and managed to remove 6 of the 7 men to safety through a hole they had cut into the wall. In later years, penniless, William sold his V.C. for £5. For the rest of his life he suffered hallucinations of being attacked by the Zulu's at the battle at Rorke's Drift. He died in 1913

**Quartermaster Edward Bloomfield (Peter Vaughn).** Born 1835 he was in charge of supply of the reserve ammunition to Charles Pope's 'G' Company, 2nd Bn, 24th of Foot. Reluctant to give this out, as it had been earmarked for Chelmsford's force, he was killed on 22nd January 1879 while handing out cartridges at Isandlwana.

**Sgt Joseph Ledworth Windridge (Joseph Powell).** Born at Birmingham in 1841.

Originally was in the 5th East Kent Rifles (K Company), as a Colour Sgt he took part in the annual rifle contest at North Fall Meadow 13th September 1875. He was promoted then demoted a number of times, mainly through excess drinking. On 2nd October 1875 was a witness at the trial, in Dover, of Pte Allan Chadwick charged, and found guilty, with selling his regimental clothing to a local man, George Rye, he met at the Marquis of Granby. After deserting Chadwick was arrested wearing civilian clothes.

On 14th May 1877 he married Helena Catherine Rawlinson at Trinity Church, Strond Street, Dover. Re-enlisted in the 2nd Bn 24th of Foot and was a Sgt in 'B' Coy at Rorke's Drift, in charge of the defence of the buildings and guarding the stores. Awarded the King's South Africa Medal with clasp. He died in 1902.

#### **Lt Gonville Bromhead (Michael Caine).**

Born in 1845. Whilst at Dover recorded as organising cricket matches. In charge of 'B' Coy 24th at Rorke's Drift. Following the battle promoted to Captain and in 1883 Brevet Major. Along with John Chard, Royal Engineers, received the V.C. for outstanding leadership. Bromhead died from enteric (typhoid) fever in February 1891 at Allahabad in India.

#### **Capt Arthur George Godwin-Austen.**

Born 1844. Was the Officer Commanding 'B' Coy, 24th Foot. Shot in the loins during the 9th Xhosa (Frontier) War, August 1877 to February 1878. After he was invalided back to England Lt G Bromhead took over his command. He died in 1939.

**Col Sgt John Alfred Tigar.** Was in hospital at the time of Isandlwana, which no doubt saved his life. As soon as he recovered he received a commission, later promoted to Major, and returned to his unit 2nd Bn 24th. He was one of a party who returned to Isandlwana in March of 1879. The sight of the terribly mutilated bodies of his comrades,

hovered over by birds of prey, haunted him for the rest of his life. In WW1 he served as a Major in the Army Service Corps depot in Cardiff. His Army career lasted for 47 years.

At least another 9 men who were stationed at the Citadel were killed at Isandlwana.

Other soldiers identified from the Western Heights Garrison Church baptism logs by Phil included;

#### **90th Regiment of Foot (Perthshire Volunteers) (Light Infantry)**

##### **Quartermaster Joseph George Newman.**

He was severely wounded at the Relief of Lucknow, India Mutiny, November 1857. Commissioned Lieutenant January 1872 he was at the Dover Citadel 1873/74. Took part in the 9th Xhosa (Frontier) War including actions at Waterkloof and Perie Bush. In the Zulu War fought at Khambula (26th March 1879) and at Ulundi (4th July 1879). He died in 1919.

#### **58th (Rutlandshire) Regiment of Foot**

9th February 1878 arrived Grand Shaft Barracks from Shorncliffe, On Sunday 23rd February 1879 the regiment attended their last church service, at the Western Heights Church, wearing their new white helmets. At 7.40am the first contingent of 3 Officers and 110 men marched out of the barracks, down the Grand Shaft and formed up in Snargate Street. It was snowing as they marched up Beach Street to the station platform to catch the 8.20am train to Portsmouth. The remainder of the regiment, 26 Officers and 796 men followed the next day. They all embarked on the troopship Russia and arrived at the Cape, South Africa on 7th March 1879.

On 3rd April, they were part of the relief column that reached Eshowe and lifted the 2 month siege and on 4th July took part in the Battle of Ulundi, Cetchwayo's capital. Cpl J Thomkinson of the 58th was killed and 10 others wounded. This was the last battle of the Zulu War and resulted in a total of 18

British killed and 1,500 Zulu's killed.

The regiment remained in South Africa for the 1st Boer War (Transvaal Rebellion) 16th December 1880 to 23rd March 1881.

Phil then mentioned a small number of people, connected to the regiments, who are buried in St Mary's Churchyard. Then went on to talk about 6 ex-pupils from the Duke of York's Royal Military School at Dover who died on active service. They were;

**J Jackson 2nd Bn 3rd Foot (The Buffs)** probably in the Xhosa (Frontier) War 1878.

**Col Sgt Frederick Henry Wolfe 1st Bn 24th Regt** killed at Isandlwana.

**Pte William Gregg 1st Bn 24th Regt** killed at Isandlwana.

**Pte Charles Samuel Lowe 1st Battalion 24th Regt** killed at Isandlwana.

**Pte Richard Lowe 1st Battalion 24th Regt** killed at Isandlwana. (Brother of Charles Samuel Lowe).

**Cpl William Henry Morris 2nd Bn 24th Regt** killed at Isandlwana.

Phil ended his most interesting talk with a Michael Caine quote "Not a lot of people know that."

*Rorke's Drift was known as kwaJimu "Jim's Land" in the Zulu language. It was a mission station and the former trading post of James Rorke, an Irish merchant.*

*Lieutenant John Chard (1847-97), commanded part of No 5 Field Company, Royal Engineers. There were also a few Natal colonial troops at Rorke's Drift.*

*The Zulu force was led by Dabulamanzi kaMpande (1839-86). He was King Cetshwayo's half-brother and had commanded the Undi Corps at the Zulu victory at Isandlwana the day before.*

*Editor*

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